Identification of "Missing Link" Families of Small DNA Tumor Viruses

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Abstract

Adenoviruses, papillomaviruses, parvoviruses and polyomaviruses are collectively known as
small DNA tumor viruses. Although it has long been recognized that small DNA tumor virus
oncoproteins and capsid proteins show a variety of structural and functional similarities, it is
unclear whether these similarities reflect descent from a common ancestor, convergent evolution,
horizontal gene transfer among virus lineages, or repeated acquisition of genes from host cells.
We report the discovery of fourteen new members of an emerging fourth family of small DNA
tumor viruses, the *Adomaviridae*. Cell culture-based expression of adomavirus open reading
frames showed that the virion structural proteins of adomaviruses are homologous to those of
adenoviruses. The search for adomaviruses unexpectedly revealed the existence of a previously
unrecognized family of animal DNA viruses that are distantly similar to virophages and other
polinton-like viruses of unicellular eukaryotes. Members of the new "adintovirus" family encode
retrovirus-like integrase proteins and adenovirus-like DNA polymerase and virion structural
proteins. Adintovirus sequences were found in genomics datasets for all major groups of
animals, including terrestrial vertebrates. Analysis of the gene content of adintoviruses supports a
model in which small DNA tumor viruses descended from more complex adintovirus-like
ancestors through gene-loss and horizontal gene transfer events occurring hundreds of millions
of years ago.

Author Summary

In contrast to cellular organisms, viruses do not encode any universally conserved genes. Even
within a given family of viruses, the primary amino acid sequences of homologous genes can
rapidly diverge to the point of unrecognizability. Although modern metagenomic surveys have
begun to expose the wide sequence diversity within known virus families, ascertaining whether
the large amount of unidentifiable sequence "dark matter" typically observed in these surveys
represents unknown virus groups remains a substantial challenge. Our searches of sequence
databases revealed more than a dozen highly divergent new members of an emerging virus
family, the *Adomaviridae*. Using methods for detection of distant homologs, we also discovered
the existence of an apparently older lineage of viruses that we name "adintoviruses." Examples
of adintoviruses, which combine a retrovirus-like integrase gene with adenovirus-like DNA
polymerase and virion structural proteins, can be found as integrants or as apparently linear DNA
molecules in genome sequencing datasets for all major animal phyla. The results suggest a
framework that ties small DNA tumor viruses into a shared evolutionary history in which key
family-level divergence events occurred in early animals and their unicellular precursors.

Introduction

Polyomaviruses, papillomaviruses, parvoviruses, and adenoviruses are collectively referred to as
small DNA tumor viruses. The four virus families encode non-enveloped virion proteins with
similar β-jellyroll core folds and express functionally similar oncogenes that inactivate cellular
tumor suppressor proteins (Figure 1)(*1, 2*). It has remained unclear how small DNA tumor
viruses might be interrelated. A current evolutionary model has placed adenoviruses on a
spectrum of double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) polinton-like viruses that encode hallmark type B
DNA polymerase (PolB) and integrase genes. Polyomaviruses, papillomaviruses, and
parvoviruses are proposed to have descended from unrelated circular Rep-encoding single-
stranded DNA (CRESS) virus ancestors (*3*). While this model accurately represents many of the
features of modern small DNA tumor viruses, it does not explain a number of observed
similarities between the four families. Achieving a better understanding of the evolutionary
origins of small DNA tumor viruses has the potential to direct comparative studies of these
ubiquitous human pathogens.

Figure 1: Examples of small DNA tumor virus genomes. Genes are color-coded based on known or inferred functions. AEP: domain resembling archaeal-eukaryotic primase small catalytic subunit; white lollipop: retinoblastoma (Rb) interaction motif; gray lollipop: domain with predicted fold similar to DNAJ chaperone proteins; PLA2: domain with predicted fold similar to phospholipase A2; Tail: domain with predicted structural similarity to dsDNA virus tail proteins or carbohydrate degrading enzymes. See main text for explanation of other gene names. Supplemental Table 1 lists accession numbers and host animal taxonomic designations.

In 2011, a novel circular dsDNA virus was discovered in a lethal disease outbreak among
Japanese eels (*Anguilla japonica*)(*4, 5*). Two related viruses have since been isolated from
Taiwanese marbled eels (*Anguilla marmorata*) and giant guitarfish (*Rhynchobatus djiddensis*)(*6,
7*). The name "adomaviruses" has been applied to this emerging family based on the fact that
they encode proteins with distant similarity to the virion-maturational proteases of *ad*enoviruses
as well as proteins distantly similar to the replicative superfamily 3 DNA helicases (S3H) of
poly*oma*viruses, papill*oma*viruses, and parvoviruses (*7*).

The starting goal of the present study was to identify the adomavirus major and minor capsid
proteins. To discover additional adomaviruses, particularly those that might serve as laboratory
models for adomavirus infection, we performed metagenomic sequencing and developed a
bioinformatics pipeline to detect candidate adomavirus sequences in the NCBI's Sequence Read

Archive (SRA). In addition to identifying more than a dozen previously unknown adomaviruses,
the searches serendipitously revealed the existence of a previously unrecognized virus family
that encodes distinctive PolB and virion proteins that are distantly similar to those of
adenoviruses. Members of the previously unrecognized family also encode a retrovirus-like
integrase gene that is distantly similar to the integrase genes of a group of unicellular eukaryote-
associated polinton-like viruses known as virophages (*8*). Analysis of the gene content of the
emerging "adintovirus" family sheds light on the evolutionary history of small DNA tumor
viruses.

Results

Identification of adomavirus virion proteins

In a gene naming convention developed for Japanese eel adomavirus (NC_015123), hypothetical
proteins are numbered using inferred late-strand open reading frame (LO) and early-strand open
reading frame (EO) designations. HHPred searches revealed that adomavirus LO8 proteins
resemble the virion maturational proteases of adenoviruses. This suggests the hypothesis that
adomavirus LO4-7 genes might be syntenic homologs of adenovirus virion structural proteins.
We set out to experimentally test this hypothesis.

To determine whether predicted adomavirus LO proteins are expressed from spliced or unspliced
ORFs, RNAseq data published by Wen and colleagues (*6*) were analyzed to determine the
splicing patterns of marbled eel adomavirus transcripts. Splice acceptors immediately upstream
of the inferred ATG initiator codons of LO4, LO5, LO6, and LO7 proteins were extensively
utilized (Supplemental Table 2). Messenger RNAs encoding the adenovirus late genes carry a
tripartite leader (TPL) that has been shown to enhance translation (*9*). A similar three-exon
leader sequence was detected upstream of the marbled eel adomavirus LO genes (Figure 1).

HHpred searches were performed to detect predicted structural similarities between adomavirus
and adenovirus proteins. LO6 ORFs show high-probability (>95%) predicted structural similarity
to a 37 amino acid hydrophobic segment of adenovirus pX, a minor virion core protein that is
thought to participate in condensation of the viral chromatin (*10*). LO6 alignments also showed
moderate probability hits for adenovirus pVI, which is believed to play a role in destabilizing
cellular membranes during the infectious entry process (*11*). The results suggest that LO6 is a
fused homolog of adenovirus pVI and pX virion core proteins.

Adomavirus LO4 proteins have a predicted C-terminal trimeric coiled-coil domain. This
relatively generic predicted fold gives a large and diverse range of hits in HHpred searches,
including the coiled-coil domains of various viral fiber proteins (for example, avian reovirus
σC). Negative-stain EM findings indicate that adomavirus virions do not have a discernible
vertex fiber (*4, 6, 7*). Some individual LO4 proteins, as well as alignments of LO4 proteins,
yielded HHpred hits for adenovirus pIX, a trimeric coiled coil protein that serves as a "cement"
that smooths the triangular facets of the adenovirus virion. The hypothesis that LO4 is a pIX
homolog could explain the smooth appearance of adomavirus facets in negative-stain EM.

Although LO5 and LO7 did not yield informative results in BLAST, HHpred, or Phyre[2]
searches, the inferred homology of the adomavirus LO4, LO6, and LO8 genes to minor
components of adenovirus virions led us to hypothesize that LO5 is a syntenic homolog of

adenovirus penton (a pentameric single-jellyroll protein that occupies virion vertices) and that
LO7 is a syntenic homolog of adenovirus hexon (a tandem double-jellyroll protein that
trimerizes to form virion facets) (*1, 10*). To experimentally test this prediction, marbled eel
adomavirus was grown in eel kidney cell culture (*6*) and virions were purified using Optiprep
gradient ultracentrifugation. Virion-rich gradient fractions were separated on SDS-PAGE gels
and bands were subjected to mass spectrometric analysis (Supplemental Figure 1). The results
indicate the presence of substantial amounts of actin and myosin derived from host eel cells.
Adomavirus LO2-3 proteins show high probability HHpred hits for Wiscott-Aldrich syndrome
protein 1 and other actin-regulatory proteins, suggesting the hypothesis that the virion
preparations might be contaminated with host cell actin due to interactions with LO2-3. Only a
small number of individual peptides representing LO2-3 were detected by mass spectrometry.
The analysis identified prominent bands in the Coomassie-stained gel as LO4, LO5, LO7, and
LO8. The relative intensities of bands identified as LO5 and LO7 are consistent with the
prediction that the two proteins constitute penton and hexon subunits, respectively. Lower
molecular weight bands showed hits for LO6, consistent with the prediction that this protein is
present in virions in an LO8-cleaved form. Marbled eel and guitarfish adomavirus LO6 proteins
encode potential adenain cleavage motifs ((MIL)XGXG or L(LR)GG)(*12*). A list of protein
modifications observed in the mass spectrometric analysis is shown in Supplemental Table 3.

Adenovirus penton proteins can spontaneously assemble into 12-pentamer subviral particles that
may serve as decoy pseudocapsids in vivo (*13*). To investigate the possibility of a comparable
phenomenon in adomaviruses, codon-modified marbled eel adomavirus LO1-LO8 expression
plasmids were transfected individually into mammalian 293TT cells (*14*). Optiprep
ultracentrifugation was used to separate virus-like particles from smaller solutes. A human
papillomavirus type 16 (HPV16) L1/L2 expression plasmid was used as a positive control for
virus-like particle (VLP) formation (*15*). Cells transfected with adomavirus LO4, LO5, or LO7
expression constructs each showed robust production of particles that migrated into the core
fractions of Optiprep gradients (Figure 2), whereas cells transfected with LO1, LO2-3, LO6, or
LO8 alone did not show evidence of particle formation (Supplemental Figure 2). In co-
transfections of various combinations of LO genes, it was found that inclusion of LO6 inhibited
the formation of LO5 and LO7 particles but did not impair the formation of LO4 particles
(Supplemental Figure 3). This result suggests that LO6 is a minor virion component that directly
interacts with LO5 and LO7.

Figure 2. Negative stain EM of particles formed after expression of single LO proteins in mammalian cells. Mammalian 293TT cells were transfected with expression plasmids encoding the indicated marbled eel adomavirus proteins. Particles were extracted from cells by detergent lysis and purified by Optiprep ultracentrifugation. Scale bars are shown at the bottom left corner of each electron micrograph.

Individually expressed LO5 and LO7 particle preparations showed dsDNA signal in Quant-iT
PicoGreen assays (Invitrogen), indicating the presence of nuclease-resistant encapsidated DNA
within the purified particles. Optiprep-purified particle preparations from cells co-transfected
with LO4, LO5, and LO7 were subjected to an additional round of nuclease digestion with salt-
tolerant Benzonase endonuclease (Sigma) followed by agarose gel filtration to remove the
nuclease and any residual digested DNA fragments. The gel filtered particles reproducibly
contained roughly seven nanograms of DNA per microgram of total protein, confirming the
presence of nuclease-resistant nonspecific cellular DNA within the particles.

Taken together, these results support the hypothesis that LO5, LO6, LO7, and LO8 are syntenic
homologs of adenovirus penton, pX/pVI, hexon, and adenain, respectively. LO4 also appears to
be a virion structural protein but the question of whether it serves as a facet cement will require
further investigation.
167

Detection of additional adomaviruses

In an effort to discover adomaviruses that infect animals amenable to laboratory study, we
performed sequencing of aquarium fish specimens and pursued data mining of public sequence
repositories. Post-mortem metagenomics analysis of an aquarium-bred Amazon red discus
cichlid (*Symphysodon discus*) exhibiting lethargy and inflamed skin lesions revealed a circular
~20 kb adomavirus genome. Histopathological analysis of skin lesions from the discus specimen
showed no evidence of intranuclear inclusions or other obvious histopathology.

Another adomavirus from an apparently healthy green arowana (*Scleropages formosus*) was first
identified as a set of short NCBI Whole-Genome Shotgun (WGS) contigs with similarity to
Japanese eel adomavirus. A complete adomavirus genome was characterized by Sanger
sequencing of overlapping PCR products using DNA left over from the original fin snip used for
the WGS project (*16*).

A bioinformatics pipeline was developed to probe the SRA. Datasets that appeared to be rich in
adomavirus-like sequences based on translated nucleotides were subjected to de novo assembly.
This approach resulted in the identification of 10 complete or nearly complete adomavirus
genomes representing distinct species (Supplemental Table 1, Figure 3). Notably, two
adomaviruses were identified from genome sequencing datasets for farmed tilapia (*Oreochromis*
niloticus), which represent a $9 billion per year global industry. Adomavirus-like fragments were
also detected in a brook salamander (*Calotriton asper*) and two closely related species of anole
lizard (genus *Anolis*). Our pipeline did not have adequate throughput to comprehensively search
the much larger volume of sequence data for mammals and birds.

Figure 3: Picture maps of previously unknown adomaviruses. The figure uses the same color scheme as Figure 1. Alpha adomaviruses are defined by the presence of an adoma-specific superfamily 3 helicase (S3H) gene, designated EO1. Beta adomaviruses instead encode a polyomavirus large T antigen (LT). In many cases, repetitive or GC-rich patches (particularly near the 3' end of the LO2-3 ORF) could not be resolved using available short-read datasets. Coverage gaps are represented as white bars. A poorly conserved set of accessory genes upstream of beta adomavirus EO1 genes show varying degrees of similarity to the S-adenosyl methionine-binding pocket of cellular SET proteins, which function as histone lysine methyltransferases. Adomavirus SET homologs are highly divergent from all previously described eukaryotic and viral SET genes. The same is true for adomavirus EO2-4 and EO3 segments that encode homologs of the catalytic small subunit of archaeal eukaryotic primases (AEPs). Supplemental Table 1 lists virus accession numbers and Linnaean designations of host animals.

Adomavirus sequences can be divided into two groups based on their replicative S3H genes. A group we designate alpha is defined by the presence of an EO1 replicase gene distantly similar to papillomavirus E1 proteins (Figure 4). Sequence and predicted structural similarities include a C-terminal S3H domain and a central nicking endonuclease-like segment referred to as the origin binding domain (*3, 17, 18*). Members of adomavirus clade beta encode proteins highly similar to the large T antigen (LT) proteins of polyomaviruses. The adomavirus LT-like proteins share a full range of familiar polyomavirus-like features, including an N-terminal DnaJ domain, a potential retinoblastoma-interaction motif (LXCXE or LXXLFD) (*19*), a nickase-like origin-binding domain, and a C-terminal S3H domain (*20*).

Figure 4: High stringency (E-10) sequence similarity network analysis of S3H proteins from indicated virus groups. An interactive Cytoscape file that incorporates virus names, accession numbers, and sequences is posted at https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/AdintoNetwork

It is thought that polyomaviruses and papillomaviruses tend to co-evolve with their animal hosts (*21, 22*). This is reflected in the fact that phylogeny within polyomavirus and papillomavirus genera recapitulates the phylogenetic relationships of host animals. Although adomavirus phylogenetic trees are currently sparse, the available data are consistent with adomavirus-host co-evolution similar to that of polyomaviruses and papillomaviruses (Supplemental Figure 4). For example, the phylogeny of adomavirus LO8 (adenain) proteins roughly correlates with the animal classes in which the sequences were found. In particular, alpha adomavirus sequences observed in RNA datasets for brook salamander and anole lizards are more closely related to one another than to fish-associated adomaviruses. The results suggest that alpha adomaviruses and beta adomaviruses have been evolving as independent lineages for at least half a billion years (Supplemental Figure 4).

Discovery of adintoviruses

Database searches for adomaviruses revealed a large number of contigs uniting an adenain homolog, penton- and hexon-like genes, and a retrovirus-like integrase gene (Figure 5, Supplemental Figure 5). We refer to this group of contigs as adintoviruses. A hallmark adintovirus feature is a large protein with a characteristic N-terminal RNA-binding zinc finger-like domain, a central papain/OTU1-like domain, an endonuclease VII-like domain, and a C-terminal type B DNA polymerase (PolB) domain. Network analysis of adintovirus PolB genes

divides them into two distinct clades (Figure 6). The predicted PolB proteins of a lineage we
designate alpha show similarity to adenovirus PolB genes, while beta adintovirus PolB genes are
distantly similar to bacteriophage PolB sequences. The appearance of two distinct clades is
recapitulated in network analyses of predicted adintovirus hexon proteins (data not shown),
suggesting the existence of two independent lineages.

Figure 5: Picture maps of select adintovirus genomes. The figure uses the same color scheme as
Figure 1. Supplemental Figure 5 shows additional examples of adintovirus genomes. Supplemental
Table 1 lists accession numbers and host animal taxonomic designations.

Figure 6: Moderate stringency (E-5) network analysis of PolB proteins. An interactive Cytoscape file that
incorporates virus names, accession numbers, and sequences is posted at
https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/AdintoNetwork

Apparently complete adintovirus genomes were re-assembled from high-throughput sequencing
datasets generated from a wide variety of animal types (Supplemental Table 1 and
https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/AdintoAll). In many cases, the consensus of
mapped reads ended abruptly, suggesting a linear, non-integrated viral genome. In some
instances, such as a barley midge (*Mayetiola destructor*) dataset, a complete linear adintovirus
genome could be assembled, but the dataset also contained a range of lower-coverage variant
sequences, some of which were flanked by inverted terminal repeats (ITRs) contiguous with
insect genomic DNA sequences. This observation suggests that the adintovirus integrase gene is
functional and mediates distinct integration events akin to those observed in virophages (*8*). A
subset of apparently integrated adintoviruses, such as contigs assembled from various crocodile
datasets, are heavily interspersed with frameshift and nonsense mutations (Figure 5). In many
cases, adintovirus-like sequences appear to be adjacent to or even infiltrated by endogenous
retroelements. These results indicate that some adintoviruses are endogenized into animal
germline DNA.

A majority of adintoviruses encode a homolog of the phospholipase A2 (PLA2) domain of
parvovirus VP1 virion proteins. The predicted adintovirus PLA2 homologs typically include a C-
terminal domain with similarity to adenovirus pX. Adintovirus "PLA2X" proteins also show
high probability HHpred hits for melittin and secreted PLA2 proteins found in bee and snake
venom. The fact that venom melittin and PLA2 act in concert (*23*) raises the interesting
hypothesis that some animal venom proteins might share common ancestry with membrane-
active viral capsid proteins.

Some adintoviruses encode homologs of the C-terminal regulatory domain of gasdermins, a
group of pore-forming proteins that serve as executioners in pyroptosis (a form of programmed
cell death) (*24*). Adintovirus homologs of a spider venom protein known as cupiennin were also
observed. Other predicted protein sequences were conserved among various adintoviruses but
did not show clear hits in BLAST or HHpred searches. We assigned these groups of unknown
adinto-conserved proteins numbered "Adintoc" names.

All classes of small DNA tumor viruses encode proteins harboring motifs, such as LXCXE, that
that are known to engage cellular retinoblastoma (Rb) and related tumor suppressor proteins (*2*).
Adenovirus E1A, papillomavirus E7, polyomavirus LT, and parvovirus NS3 oncogenes typically
encode the Rb-binding motif just upstream of a consensus casein kinase 2 acceptor motif
((ST)XX(DE)). Some oncogenes, such as E1A, encode an additional conserved motif, referred to
as CR1, that resembles Rb pAB groove-interacting motifs ((DEN)(LIMV)XX(LM)(FY)) (*19,*
25). In general, these predicted Rb-interacting motifs are adjacent to potential zinc or iron-sulfur
binding motifs (typically, paired CXXC). Open reading frames encoding combinations of these
motifs are frequently observed in adintovirus contigs (Supplemental Figure 5). We refer to these
predicted proteins as "oncoids" due to their similarities to the known oncogenes of small DNA
tumor viruses. Predicted adintovirus homologs of anti-apoptotic proteins, such as Bcl2 and IAP,
were also observed. Surprisingly, oncoid-like genes were also observed in polintoviruses of
unicellular organisms (Supplemental Table 1, Supplemental Figure 6 and
https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/AdintoAll). These observations raise the
hypothesis that the oncogenes of modern small DNA tumor viruses descended from accessory
genes that first arose in viruses of early eukaryotes.

Adintoviruses were detected in diverse chordate datasets ranging from lancelets (*Branchiostoma*
belcheri) to box turtles (*Terrapene mexicana triunguis*). A seemingly complete adintovirus
genome was found in a transcriptomic dataset for a Mexican blind tetra cavefish (*Astyanax*
mexicanus). Adintovirus transcripts were most abundant in cavefish head, kidney, and intestine
samples and least abundant in muscle and whole embryo samples (Supplemental Table 4). In
contrast to the lancelet and box turtle datasets, which showed a high degree of intra-host
adintovirus sequence diversity at varying abundance, the cavefish adintovirus sequences were
relatively uniform. The observation is consistent with possible bottlenecking of a single
adintovirus strain into the sampled population of aquarium fish. Cavefish could provide a
tractable small vertebrate model for adintovirus infection.

The only obvious examples of adintoviruses in mammal datasets were found in a PacBio-based
WGS survey of bovine lung tissue. Sequences outside the ITRs were highly diverse but in a few
instances showed BLASTN similarity to genomic DNA sequences of various beetles, including
Tribolium castaneum (a flour beetle that commonly infests cattle feed). It is possible that
adintovirus sequences found in some datasets represent environmental contaminants, as opposed
to an infection of the organism that was the subject of the sequencing effort.

Identification of exotic parvoviruses

BLAST searches using alpha adintovirus PolB sequences consistently returned high-likelihood
matches to the PolB genes of an emerging group of bipartite parvo-like viruses known as
bidnaviruses (*26*). SRA searches for additional examples of bidna-class PolB genes revealed
bidnavirus-like contigs in datasets for false wolf spider (*Tengella perfuga*) and Tasmanian devil
(*Sarcophilus harrisii*) feces (Figure 7). The datasets were searched for additional contigs
encoding the same inverted terminal repeat sequences (which are conserved between the two
segments of known bidnaviruses) and for contigs encoding homologs of previously reported
bidnavirus proteins. Second segments were not detected, suggesting that the *Tengella* and
Sarcophilus bidnaviruses may be monopartite.

Figure 7. Parvovirus genome maps. Figure uses the same color scheme as Figure 1. GIIM
indicates similarity to group II intron maturases. Accession numbers are listed in Supplemental
Table 1.

Sequence queries in GenBank nr, WGS, and TSA databases revealed a large and highly diverse
range of parvovirus NS1-like genes in all major animal phyla. With the exception of parvovirus-
like contigs found in datasets for *Abeoforma whisleri* and *Ichthyophonus hoferi* (unicellular
eukaryotes that are thought to be closely related to animals), parvovirus NS1 sequences were not
detected in datasets for non-animal eukaryotes. Interestingly, the *Abeoforma* contig encodes a
protein with similarity (HHPred probability 82%) to the reverse transcriptase domain of group II
intron maturases.

Analysis of S3H genes

Polyomavirus LT, papillomavirus E1, and adomavirus EO1 replicase proteins have an origin-
binding domain that shows clear structural similarity to the HUH "nickase" endonuclease
domain of parvovirus NS1 proteins (*3, 17*). The replicase genes of CRESS viruses share the
same HUH-S3H domain architecture. Many CRESS viruses encode an ORF "overprinted" in the
+1 frame of the Rep ORF. Similarly, overprinted ORFs are often observed in parvovirus NS1
genes as well as in polyomavirus LT genes (*27*).

We did not detect examples of adintovirus-specific S3H genes. Although many virophage-class
viruses encode proteins with S3H domains (*28*), our searches confirm that the S3H proteins of
virophage-like viruses lack detectable HUH endonuclease-like domains and lack overprinted
ORFs. Furthermore, virophage-class S3H proteins did not cluster with small DNA tumor virus
S3H proteins in network analyses. In contrast, similarity was observed between a small subset of
CRESS virus Rep proteins and the replicase proteins of parvoviruses and papillomaviruses
(Figure 8). These observations support the previously proposed view that CRESS, polyoma,
papilloma, and parvovirus replicase genes share more recent common ancestry with one another
than with the S3H genes of other known virus lineages (*3*).

Figure 8: Network analysis of S3H replicase proteins. An EFI-EST analysis with a cutoff of E-5 was
performed on small DNA tumor virus and select CRESS virus replicase proteins. A Cytoscape file indicating
virus names and accession numbers is posted at
https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/AdintoNetwork

Discussion

In this report, we began by identifying the hexon and penton genes of the emerging adomavirus
family. We demonstrated that the adomavirus LO4-8 array is homologous to the adenovirus late

gene array that encodes most of the virion structural proteins. The ability of adomavirus virion
proteins to assemble into irregular "virus-like" particles should facilitate the development of
recombinant vaccines against adomaviruses.

We identified two distinct lineages of adomaviruses that appear to have been independently co-
evolving with their vertebrate hosts for at least half a billion years (Supplemental Figure 4).
Within both of these adomavirus lineages, there are members associated with commercially
important fish species. Surprisingly three closely related alpha adomavirus-like segments were
observed in RNA sequencing datasets for terrestrial vertebrates. It will be important to apply
emerging higher-throughput search algorithms, such as Mash Screen (*29*), to exhaustively search
for adomaviruses in deep sequencing datasets for other terrestrial vertebrates, particularly
humans.

Our searches for adomaviruses serendipitously revealed an apparently older lineage of animal-
tropic viruses that we name adintoviruses. Adintoviruses encode a number of genes that appear
to be homologs of membrane-active proteins found in animal venom. These include bee and
snake venom PLA2 and melittin, as well as a spider venom protein called cupiennin. In some
cases, these proteins also score as weakly similar to bacterial colicin proteins or bacteriophage
holin proteins, which play a role in disrupting bacterial membranes during the infectious entry
process. We speculate that some types of animal venom genes may be endogenized membrane
active virion protein genes. It also appears that alpha adintoviruses share relatively recent
common ancestry with some segments of bracoviruses (Supplemental Figure 5), a group of
endogenized virus-like elements that parasitoid wasps inject alongside their eggs (*30*).

It has generally been assumed that the functionally similar oncogenes found in papillomaviruses,
polyomaviruses, parvoviruses, and adenoviruses arose through convergent evolution or through
horizontal gene transfer between virus families (*2*). Although small DNA tumor virus oncogenes
show extremely low overall sequence similarity, they can be roughly defined based on the
presence of short linear motifs. Many adintoviruses encode candidate "oncoid" proteins with
these motifs. Unexpectedly, it appears that some virophage-class viruses of unicellular organisms
also encode oncogene-like proteins (Supplemental Figure 6). These observations raise the
hypothesis that the oncogenes of modern small DNA tumor viruses might have descended from a
class of accessory genes that evolved before the appearance of multicellular animals.

Although the current study indicates clear homologies between adenovirus, adomavirus, and
adintovirus virion proteins, the origins of polyomavirus and papillomavirus virion proteins
remain unclear. It has previously been suggested that the major capsid proteins the smaller tumor
virus families might have arisen from the capsid proteins of CRESS and/or ssRNA viruses (*3*).
This would have involved a complex shift from the simple T=1 icosahedral geometry of CRESS
virions, in which the strands of the core ß-jellyroll of the major capsid protein are parallel to the
lumen of the virion, to the more complex T=7 perpendicular jellyroll organization seen in
papillomaviruses and polyomaviruses (*1*). Furthermore, CRESS viruses typically have genomes
less than 3 kb in size, while papillomaviruses and polyomaviruses are typically 5-8 kb in size.
Although a few CRESS viruses with 5-9 kb genomes have recently been reported, the larger
CRESS virus genomes each encode multiple parallel-jellyroll capsid protein paralogs or
unrelated non-jellyroll filamentous virion proteins (*31*). Thus, there does not appear to be a clear
precedent for the proposed parallel-to-perpendicular reorientation of a single-jellyroll subunit
among known CRESS viruses. We propose a simpler model in which the pentameric

papillomavirus and polyomavirus capsid proteins were derived from the perpendicular single-jellyroll penton proteins of adintovirus-like ancestors. The observation that the inferred penton protein of marbled eel adomavirus can assemble into roughly spherical ~50 nm structures carrying non-specifically encapsidated dsDNA raises the possibility that minimal evolutionary adaptations would be required to construct a 72-penton structure capable of housing a polyomavirus or papillomavirus genome. This model could be extended to the splayed-jellyroll capsomers of parvoviruses. One line of support for this idea is the observation that parvovirus virion proteins typically include an N-terminal domain closely resembling adintovirus PLA2X proteins. Similarly, a small subset of parvoviruses appear to encode capsid protein domains with distant similarity to predicted adintovirus tail-like proteins (Figure 7) (*32*).

To further explore the hypothesis that papillomavirus, polyomavirus, and parvovirus virion proteins were derived from adintovirus-like ancestors, extremely low stringency network analyses were performed for various classes of major and minor capsid proteins. The analysis rests on the assumption that a small subset of members of each virus family might better reflect the primary sequence of a common ancestor, which would be revealed by linkages between a few members of different clusters. Aside from the previously described distant similarity between the parvovirus PLA2 domain and the Cap genes of small subset of non-animal CRESS viruses (*33, 34*), no clear connections were observed between groups of oma-class virion proteins and CRESS virus capsid proteins. The low-stringency analysis does, however, suggest possible similarities between papillomavirus, polyomavirus, and parvovirus major capsid proteins and the penton proteins of adenoviruses, adomaviruses, and adintoviruses (Supplemental Figure 7). Possible distant similarity was also observed for some combinations of minor capsid proteins (Supplemental Figure 8).

A hypothetical framework that could account for the apparent similarities between extant small DNA tumor viruses is presented in Figure 9. A testable prediction of this model is that adintovirus PLA2X and adomavirus LO6, like the papillomavirus and polyomavirus minor capsid proteins, will be found to directly interact with the luminal surface of pentons in the assembled virion. We also predict that the fold of polyomavirus VP2 and papillomavirus L2 proteins may be found to resemble the folds of adintovirus PLA2X, GasderminX, or cupiennin proteins. The model further predicts that adenovirus pX, in addition to its proposed role in condensing adenovirus genomes (*10*), participates in destabilization of host cell membranes during the infectious entry process in a manner similar to that of papillomavirus L2 proteins (*35, 36*).

Figure 9: A hypothetical framework for small DNA tumor virus evolution.

At the outset of this study, adintoviruses were not recognizable as viruses in basic BLAST
searches and time-consuming structure-guided approaches were required to reveal distant
similarities to known proteins. An important implication is that there may be additional
unrecognized families of animal viruses hiding in plain sight in sequence databases. To address
this problem, it will be important to develop higher throughput methods for more sensitive
structure-guided searches and for understanding which combinations predicted homologs co-
occupy single contigs. It will be especially important to apply high throughput annotation
pipelines, such as Cenote-Taker (*31*), that generate human-readable GenBank compliant maps.
Deposition of these annotated new viral genomes in publicly accessible databases will be critical
for expanding our understanding of the animal virome.

Materials and Methods

Sample Collection and cell culture

A red discus cichlid (*Symphysodon discus*) was purchased at a pet shop in Gainesville, Florida.
The fish was moribund and showed erythematous skin lesions. Propagation of the discus
adomavirus in cell culture was attempted by overlaying skin tissue homogenates on Grunt Fin
(GF) and Epithelioma Papulosum Cyprini cell lines (ATCC). Neither cytopathic effects nor
qPCR-based detection of viral replication were observed during two blind passages of 14 days
each.

Dr. Chiu-Ming Wen generously provided EK-1 cells (a Japanese eel kidney line) infected with
the Taiwanese marbled eel adomavirus (*6*). The virus was propagated by inoculation of
supernatants from the infected culture into uninfected EK-1 cells cultured at room temperature in

422 DMEM with 10 % fetal calf serum. Human embryonic kidney-derived 293TT cells were cultured
423 as previously described (*14*).

Viral genome sequencing

For the discus adomavirus, total DNA was extracted from a skin lesion and subjected to deep
sequencing. Marbled eel adomavirus virions were purified from lysates of infected EK-1 cells
using Optiprep gradient ultracentrifugation (*37*). DNA extracted from Optiprep gradient fractions
was subjected to rolling circle amplification (RCA, TempliPhi, GE Health Sciences). The
marbled eel adomavirus RCA products and discus total DNA were prepared with a Nextera XT
DNA Sample Prep kit and sequenced using the MiSeq (Illumina) sequencing system with 2 ×
250 bp paired-end sequencing reagents. In addition, the marbled eel adomavirus RCA product
was digested with *AclI* and *EcoRI* restriction enzymes and the resulting early and late halves of
the viral genome were cloned separately into the *AclI* and *EcoRI* restriction sites of pAsylum+.
The sequence of the cloned genome was verified by a combination of MiSeq and Sanger
sequencing. The clones will be made available upon request.

For the arowana adomavirus, overlapping PCR primers were designed based on WGS accession
numbers LGSE01029406, LGSE01031009, LGSE01028643, LGSE01028176, and
LGSE01030049 (*16*). PCR products were subjected to primer walking Sanger sequencing.

Marbled eel adomavirus transcript analysis, late ORF expression, and virion purification

RNAseq reads reported by Wen et al (*6*) were aligned to the marbled eel adomavirus genome
using HISAT2 version 2.0.5 (*38*) with the following options: "--rna-strandness FR --dta --no-
mixed --no-discordant". Integrated Genome Viewer (IGV) version 2.4.9 (*39*) was used to
determine splice junctions and their depth of coverage. Additional validation was performed by
visual inspection using CLC Genomics Workbench 12.

Codon-modified expression constructs encoding the marbled eel adomavirus LO1-LO8 proteins
were designed according to a modified version of a previously reported algorithm
(https://github.com/BUCK-LCO-NCI/Codmod_as_different_as_possible)(*40*). 293TT cells were
transfected with LO expression constructs for roughly 48 hours. Cells were lysed in a small
volume of PBS with 0.5% Triton X-100 or Brij-58 and Benzonase Dnase/Rnase (Sigma)(*41*).
After one hour of maturation at neutral pH, the lysate was clarified at 5000 x g for 10 min. The
clarified lysate was loaded onto a 15-27-33-39-46% Optiprep gradient in PBS with 0.8 M NaCl.
Gradient fractions were collected by bottom puncture of the tube and screened by PicoGreen
dsDNA stain (Invitrogen), BCA, or SDS-PAGE analysis. Electron microscopic analysis was
performed by spotting several microliters of Optiprep fraction material (or, in some instances,
particles exchanged out of Optiprep using agarose gel filtration) onto carbon support film on
Cu/Ni/Au grids, followed by staining with 0.5% uranyl acetate.

Discovery of viral sequences in NCBI databases

Compilations of sequences use in this study are posted at the following link:
https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/Adinto. Papillomavirus E1 sequences were
downloaded from PaVE https://pave.niaid.nih.gov (*42*). Polyomavirus LT sequences were
downloaded from PyVE https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/Polyomavirus (*22*).
Parvovirus NS1 proteins and S3H proteins of virophage-like viruses were compiled from

multiple databases, including RefSeq, WGS, and TSA, using TBLASTN searches. Adenovirus,
virophage, and bacteriophage PolB sequences were downloaded from GenBank nr using
DELTA-BLAST searches (*43*) with alpha or beta adintovirus PolB proteins as bait.

SRA datasets for fish, amphibians, and reptiles were searched using DIAMOND (*44*) or NCBI
SRA Toolkit (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK158900/) in TBLASTN mode using
adomavirus protein sequences as the subject database or query, respectively. Reads with
similarity to the baits were collected and subjected to BLASTX searches against a custom library
of viral proteins representing adomaviruses and other small DNA tumor viruses. SRA datasets of
interest were subjected to de novo assembly using the SPAdes suite (*45, 46*) or Megahit (*47, 48*).
Contigs encoding virus-like proteins were identified by TBLASTN searches against adomavirus
protein sequences using Bowtie (*49*). The candidate contigs were validated using the CLC
Genomics Workbench 12 align to reference function.

Adintoviruses were extracted from WGS and TSA datasets using TBLASTN searches with S3H
genes of various small DNA tumor viruses or the PolB, adenain, or PLA2 genes of Nephila orb-
weaver spider alpha adintovirus GFKT014647032. Predicted protein sequences were
automatically extracted from contigs of interest using getorf (http://bioinfo.nhri.org.tw/cgi-
bin/emboss/getorf) (*50*). Proteins were clustered using EFI-EST (https://efi.igb.illinois.edu/efi-
est/)(*51, 52*) and displayed using Cytoscape v3.7.1 (*53*). Multiple sequence alignments were
constructed using MAFFT (https://toolkit.tuebingen.mpg.de/#/tools/mafft). Individual or aligned
protein sequences were subjected to HHpred searches
(https://toolkit.tuebingen.mpg.de/#/tools/hhpred) (*54*) of PDB, Pfam-A, NCBI Conserved
Domains, and PRK databases.

Contigs were annotated using Cenote-Taker (*31*) with an iteratively refined library of conserved
adintovirus protein sequences. Maps were drawn using MacVector 17 software.

The phylogenetic analysis shown in Supplemental Figure 4 was performed using Phylogeny.fr
(*55*). Host animal divergence times were obtained from TimeTree of Life
http://www.timetree.org (*56*).

Mass Spectrometry

Optiprep-purified marbled eel adomavirus virions were precipitated with trichloroacetic acid. A
1 ml sample was treated with 100 µl of 0.15% deoxycholic acid and incubated at room
temperature for 10 minutes. 100 µl of 100% TCA was then added and the sample was vortexed
and incubated on ice for 30 minutes. Following the incubation, the sample was centrifuged at
10,000 x g for 10 minutes at 4°C. The supernatant was removed, and the remaining pellet was
washed with ice-cold acetone to remove residual TCA. The protein pellet was solublized with
NuPAGE Sample Buffer + 5% BME (Sigma) and run on a 10-12% Bis-Tris MOPS gel
(Thermo). The protein bands were visualized using InstantBlue (Expedeon). Thirteen gel bands
were individually excised and placed into 1.5 ml Eppendorf tubes. The gel bands were sent to the
National Cancer Institute in Fredrick, Maryland where they were de-stained, digested with
trypsin, and processed on a Thermo Fisher Q Exactive HF Mass Spectrometer. Thermo Proteome
Discoverer 2.2 software was used for initial protein identification. The uninterpreted mass
spectral data were also searched against *Anguilla* proteins (Swiss-Prot and TrEMBL database

containing 105,268 proteins), Bos taurus proteins (Swiss-Prot and TrEMBL database containing
48,288 proteins), a common contaminants database (cRAPome), and translated marbled eel
adomavirus ORFs. Further analysis was conducted using Protein Metrics Biopharma software to
identify modifications missed in initial analyses.

Ethics Statement

All animal tissue samples were received as diagnostic specimens collected for pathogen testing
and disease investigation purposes.

Data Availability

Sequences generated from this study are available via the accession numbers listed in
Supplemental Table 1. Additional annotated sequence files are posted at
https://ccrod.cancer.gov/confluence/display/LCOTF/Adinto

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